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ABSTRACT

This action research project implemented and evaluated a portfolio program for assessing student performance. The targeted population consisted of elementary and middle grade students in two schools. The inadequacy of traditional evaluation methods was documented by means of parent and staff surveys. Common discrepancies were found in student performance on traditional measures versus ability, and a weak relation was found between curriculum and test content. A portfolio assessment program was implemented in the two schools; the program included scoring rubrics, student reflections, peer and parent conferences, and parent and staff surveys. Post intervention data indicated an increase in individualized planning, student motivation, parent communication, and assessment of student growth as a result of the portfolio assessment program. (Appendices include surveys and results, and consent forms. Contains 18 references.) (HTH)

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IMPROVING STUDENT MOTIVATION, PARENT COMMUNICATION, AND ASSESSMENT WHILE IMPLEMENTING A PORTFOLIO PROGRAM

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement of the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a portfolio program that improved individualized planning, student motivation, parent communication, and assessment of student growth. The targeted population consisted of elementary and middle grade students. Evidence that this problem existed included anecdotal records, and parent/student feedback on the effectiveness of traditional assessment measures.

Analysis of the probable cause data revealed that portfolio assessment programs provide for better individualized planning, student motivation, parent communication, and assessment of student growth as compared to the current measures of assessment. The researchers reported common discrepancies in student performance on traditional measures versus ability and weak relation between curriculum and test content. Parents reported inadequacies in current assessment measures when used to interpret student academic performance and growth.

A review of solution strategies suggested by experts combined with an analysis of the problem resulted in the implementation of a portfolio program with: scoring rubrics, student reflections, peer and parent conferencing, and parent and staff surveys.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in individualized planning, student motivation, parent communication, and assessment of student growth.

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CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Students in the targeted schools are assessed with measures that are difficult for students and parents to interpret. These current measures are not effective when used for student motivation, parent communication or assessment of student growth. Evidence that the problem exists includes anecdotal records and parent/student feedback on the effectiveness of traditional assessment measures.

The research includes two schools, which will be referred to as sites A and B. Schools A and B belong to the same community consolidated district.

Immediate Problem Context

School A

School A is located in a northwestern suburb of a large mid-western city. According to the 1996-97 school report card, the enrollment number is 552, of which 77.5% are White, 10.5% Asian, 6.4% Black and 5.6% Hispanic. The population includes 3.9% low-income and 7.3% Limited-English-Proficient students. Free lunches are made available for eligible low-income students. Eligible bilingual education students are serviced by P.E.P. (Potentially English Proficient). Of the student population, 96%

attend school regularly with a student mobility rate of 18.5%. Chronic truants are students who are absent from school without valid cause for 10% or more of the last 180 school days. Four chronic truants contribute to a truancy rate of 0.7%.

School A is comprised of five sections each of grades one through four, five sections of half-day kindergarten and four half-day sections of Early Childhood. The Early childhood sections are part of the district's special education program housed in School A. Students who are not placed in self-contained classrooms attend their home schools. School A currently has three students with disabilities who are participating in general education classrooms in kindergarten through fourth grades. In addition to the district's special education program, School A serves twelve resource students. The average class size for grades kindergarten through fourth is 22.9 students.

The philosophy of School A is to develop the full potential of each student's intellectual, ethical, physical, creative, cultural, social and technological capabilities. To accomplish this, School A employs twenty-eight teachers in addition to an extensive support staff. The support staff includes: a physical therapist, an adaptive P.E. teacher, two full-time and one half-time speech and language therapists, a reading specialist and a school nurse. Students in grades one through four attend music for two twenty-five minute periods, physical education for three twenty-five minute periods and one hour of art per week. Bright Start is another school-based program that provides beginning readers with remedial services. Eligible first grade students receive pull-out services five times a week.

School A opened as a two story, nineteen classroom building in 1979. It was comprised of two kindergarten rooms, three rooms of each grade level one through five, a

special education room, a music room, a double teaching station gymnasium, library/learning center, two administrative offices and storage space. It housed 500 students. Since 1979, the school has undergone two reconstructions to meet the needs of the growing enrollment. School A is now a twenty-three classroom school including three kindergarten classrooms, five sections grades first through fourth, a larger library/learning center, a music room, a computer lab and an enlarged gymnasium. It currently houses 552 students.

Classrooms A and B-School A

Classrooms A and B are self-contained regular education first and third grade classrooms, respectively. The school day consists of six hours of instruction, beginning at 9:00a.m.and ending at 3:30p.m. with a forty-five minute break for lunch and recess. The curriculum includes the following minutes of instruction per week:

Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies	Movement Education
750	250	150	150	50

Immediate Problem Context

School B

School B is located in a northwestern suburb of a large mid-western city. The enrollment is 1,143. Of this enrollment, 76.4% are White, 12.9% Asian, 6.0% Hispanic, and 4.5% Black. The population includes 2.6% low-income students and 3.7% Limited-English-Proficient. Free lunches are made available for eligible low-income students. Eligible bilingual education students are serviced by P.E.P. (Potentially English Proficient). Of the student population, 95.7% attend school regularly with a student

mobility rate of 6.3% (School Report Card, 1997). School B is comprised of twenty-one sections of fifth grade and twenty-one sections of sixth grade. Self-contained special education programs include two cross-categorical programs which meet the needs of learning disabled, behavior disordered, and mildly mentally impaired students in grades five and six. School B currently has eight students with disabilities who are participating in general education classrooms in grades five and six. School B services fifty-eight special education resource students whose needs are met in the general education classrooms. The average size regular fifth grade classroom consists of 25 students. The average size regular sixth grade classroom consists of 28 students.

The philosophy of School B is to develop the full potential of each student's intellectual, ethical, physical, creative, cultural, social and technological capabilities. To accomplish this, School B employs 42 regular education teachers, three P.E. teachers, two music teachers, and two art teachers in addition to an extensive support staff. The support staff includes the following: a school psychologist, a social worker, three resource consultants, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, an adaptive P.E. teacher, a speech and language therapist, a reading specialist, a counselor, two self-contained special education teachers, two ESL teachers and a school nurse. Students in grades five and six attend music class for two twenty-five minute periods, physical education class for three twenty-five minute periods and one fifty minute art period per week. All fifth graders participate in the D.A.R.E. program. The D.A.R.E. program is a drug awareness program that is taught by the local police department. This program is taught once a week for 45 minutes for a period of eight weeks. Other school activities include: band, chorus, art club, intramural hockey and a chess club. Programs that are

made available for students who are having academic difficulties include the Success Club, study hall and Saturday school.

School B originally opened as a junior high school in 1975. From 1983 to 1986, the junior high students were bused out of district while a new junior high school was being built. In 1986, site B opened as a middle school building with an enrollment of 750. In 1990, this school went through reconstruction, adding fifteen classrooms and a gym to meet the needs of the growing enrollment.

At School B, the targeted program is a resource program staffed by one resource consultant, one instructional aide and four general education fifth grade teachers. This program is called the Team of Four. Each general education classroom includes five students who receive special education resource. These students, as well as the other students, are serviced through a variety of teaching methods which include integrated instruction, co-teaching, parallel teaching, small group instruction, one-to-one assistance and pull-out services.

District A

Schools A and B

Schools A and B are part of a district containing seven schools with five elementary buildings (K-4), one middle school and one junior high school. This district services three local communities. The average teacher experience for Sites A and B is 9.2 years. The percentage of teachers that hold Bachelor's degrees is 61.6% with the remaining 38.4% having earned Masters or above. The average pupil/teacher ratio is 22.1:1. The pupil to administration ratio is 298.2:1. The district's average teacher salary

is $37,558. The average administrator's salary is $74,085. This district spends $4,353 per pupil annually (School Report Card, 1997).

In 1997, the district implemented a technology model, which included the purchase of two computers per classroom as well as a computer lab in each school. The computer labs in Schools A and B house fifteen and thirty computers, respectively. In order to promote the use of technology in the classroom, teachers are required to earn forty-eight credit hours of technology training within a three year span. This training is supplied by the school district.

Community A

Schools A and B

Students who attend Schools A and B belong to one community. According to the 1994 census, this community has a total population of 39,100. The median age of this population is 29.2 years. Of the population, 88.5% are White, 7.8% Asian, 6.6% Hispanic, 3.8% Black, 0.2% American Indian, and 0.3% Other. Homeowners make up 70.8% of the population, while 29.2% rent. The average home sells for $159,000. Of the population, 26.6% hold a Bachelor's degree, 23.5% are high school graduates, 12.3% have earned less than a high school diploma, and 6.3% have earned a graduate's degree. The median household income is $62,155. The unemployment rate is 4.3%. There are thirteen religious institutions, one public library, and one hotel convention center. A regional shopping mall is located one half mile north of the town. There are three community shopping centers and twelve neighborhood shopping plazas. The town's park district consists of 29 parks and playgrounds, two water parks, organized football, baseball, soccer and swim programs.

National Context of Problem

Educational strategies and practices are continually evolving. These changes have caused discrepancies between methods of instruction and methods of assessment. Presently, skilled educators use methods to encourage higher level thinking skills rather than rote memorization. Our focus now is on the process of completing an objective and we are placing less formal concern on the product. "Examinations fail to adequately capture the learning we seek for our students; nor are they consistent with the learning processes we value…richer and more personal forms of assessment are needed" (Gordon, R. and Julius, T. 1995, p. 5). Evidence shows that national standards do not correlate with individual district goals. Archbald and Newmann state that a major disadvantage of standardized tests is their "insensitivity to curriculum in specific subject areas and their lack of predictive relationship to more authentic forms of achievement" (Archbald, Newmann, 1988, p.19). Across the nation both educators and parents are seeking a valid, instruction based means of assessment that can easily be interpreted and applied to a specific school program. According to Mikki Terry, the director of professional development for the A.S.C.D., "experts consider standardized tests unreliable for young children's abilities" (Cohen, Deborah L., 1992, p.1). "The emphasis today is shifting from standardized tests and traditional multiple-choice tests to alternative forms of assessment that require a 'direct examination of student performance on significant tasks that are relevant to life outside of school'" (Burke, Fogarty, Belgrad, 1994, p. VI).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the ineffectiveness of current assessment tools, parent and staff surveys were administered at Sites A and B. These surveys were conducted and tabulated prior to the development of an intervention design. The intent of polling parents and staff was to gain information regarding the attitudes towards current assessment tools. The effectiveness of these tools in fostering student motivation, metacognition and parent communication was the subject of these surveys.

At Site A, classroom A, 25 presurveys were administered during the first weeks of September (Appendix A). Twenty-one surveys were completed by parents and returned. Summaries of these surveys are presented in the proceeding tables (Appendices C and D).

Table 1

Parent Survey Response Regarding Current Measures of Assessment for Sites A and B

Administered September, 1998

September Presurvey 25 Administered/21 Completed	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Agree**	Strongly Agree
The school report card provides a clear understanding of my child's academic performance in school.		8	11	3
My child is able to self evaluate and judge their own work.		14	7	0
Standardized test results provide me with an accurate reflection of my child's academic abilities.		13	8	1
My child's performance on tests accurately reflects their performance in school.		10	10	1

n = 21

The data presented in Table 1 reports parent responses to questions pertaining to teacher reporting, effectiveness of current measures as well as perceptions of student reflection and performance. Forty-seven percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that the current school report card provides a clear understanding of their child's academic performance in school while 34% and 13% disagreed. A large percentage, 56% disagreed with the statement "Standardized test results provide me with an accurate reflection of my child's academic abilities. Thirty-four percent agreed and one respondent strongly agreed that standardized tests serve as an effective measure of student growth and performance. Sixty percent of parents responded that their child was unable to self-evaluate and judge their own work. Finally just 8% of those surveyed indicated that their child felt confident when taking standardized tests. These findings

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support the writer's probable cause with a majority of responses indicating a need for supplemental measures to enhance reporting, student metacognition and communication.

Table 2

Parent Presurvey Response Regarding Goal Setting Participants Site A, Classroom A

Administered September, 1998

September Presurvey	Teacher	Parent and Teacher	Teacher, Parent and Student	Teacher and Student
Who do you think should be involved in setting academic goals for your child?	**0**	**3**	**18**	**1**

n = 21

The remaining two statements on the presurvey sought to determine parental opinion regarding effective tools for reporting and partnerships for goal setting. Table two illustrates the results to question number four, "Who do you think should be involved in setting academic goals for your child?" Again the findings support the objectives of this actions research project with 78% of the parents indicating their opinion that students and parents should be included in opportunities for goal setting with the teacher.

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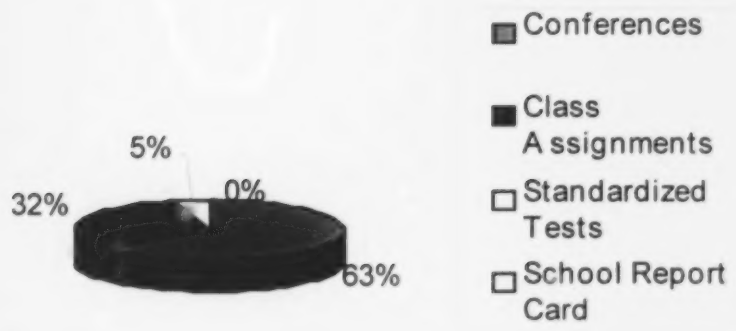
Table 3

Parent Survey Response Regarding Most Effective Assessment Practice for Site A, Classroom A Administered September 1998



n = 21

Table 3 illustrates the results of parent responses regarding effective assessment practices. Of the 21 responses, 14 reported parent/teacher conferences as the most effective means of reporting student performance. Seven parents indicated that class assignments serve as an accurate measurement tool. Of the 21 responses one parent stated that standardized test scores provide useful information regarding their child's academic performance. Interestingly, no respondents indicated the school report card as a tool that provided helpful information about their child school performance. The data collected from the presurvey demonstrates a significant percentage of parents were unable to understand their child's academic performance using current methods alone. Sixty-three percent of the parents surveyed indicated their strongest preference was conferences with their child's teacher. Thirty-two percent reported class assignments

were the most indicative measure of their child's performance. Finally, one respondent reported that they found standardized test scores useful when trying to understand their child's academic progress. The data collected from the presurvey demonstrated a significant percentage of parents were unable to understand their child's academic performance using current measures alone.

At Site A, Classroom B, 24 parent surveys and 21 staff surveys were administered (Appendix A). Of the 24 parent surveys, 20 were completed. Of the 21 staff surveys, 12 were returned. Summaries of these surveys are presented follow (Appendices D and E).

Table 4

Parent Survey Response Regarding Standardized Measures of Assessment for Sites A and B Administered September, 1998

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
School report card provides clear understanding of child's academic performance.	1	3	8	7
My child is able to self-evaluate and judge their own work.	0	8	9	3
My child displays pride in their work.	0	0	7	12
Standardized tests provide me with an accurate reflection of my child's academic abilities.	0	5	12	2

n = 19

Questions on the survey related to the level at which parents understood the school report card, student self-evaluation of their work, student motivational levels concerning pride in their academics, and whether or not parents felt that standardized assessment tools were an accurate portrayal of their child. Regarding the school report card, 79% of the parents surveyed reported that it provided a clear understanding of their child's academic performance, while 21% disagreed with this statement. The majority of the parents responding did not appear at this time to have concerns with the current report card being used to document student progress. It is the intent of the researchers to show

that using portfolios in the classroom can enhance the understanding of these assessment tools.

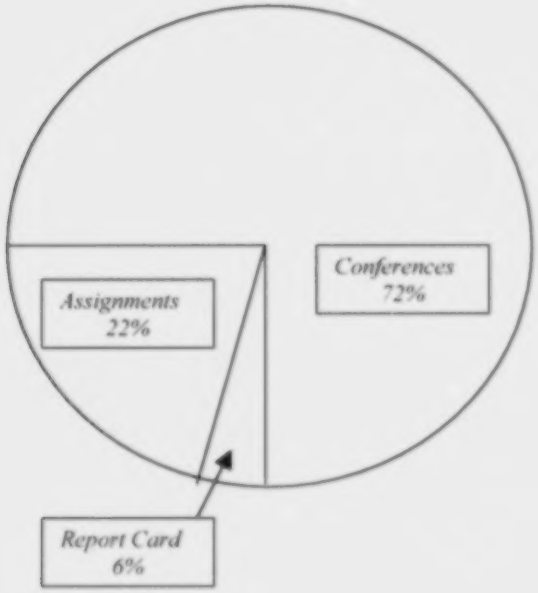
On the presurvey, parents were asked to report whether they felt their child was able to self-evaluate and judge their own work. Responses to this question were somewhat divided, with 45% of the parents agreeing and 15% strongly agreeing that their child was capable of self-evaluation. Forty percent of the respondents stated that they disagreed that their child could in fact evaluate him/herself academically. A comprehensive portfolio program teaches students to conference with peers, teachers, and parents about their academic performance with consistent reflection regarding their work samples in the portfolio. Through the use of such a program, the ability to self-evaluate academic work becomes natural for the student and assessment of work samples becomes meaningful.

Students that have a high academic motivation level will most likely show pride in their school work. Parents were asked on the presurvey to state whether or not they felt their child displayed pride in their academic work. From the surveys returned, 37% agreed and 63% strongly agreed that their child displayed pride in their academic work. It would appear from these responses that there is not a concern regarding the level of pride which students hold for the work they complete in school. However, there is a discrepancy between the opinion of the parents and that of the teachers. When surveyed, 58% of the teachers reported that they disagreed with the statement, "Students turn in quality work that they display pride in." Within the academic realm, there is reason to consider the possible methods that student pride can be improved upon.

Regarding standardized testing, parents were asked on the presurvey to report whether they felt that this assessment tool provided them with an accurate reflection of their child's academic abilities. Eleven percent strongly agreed with this statement, while 63% agreed and 26% disagreed. Presurvey responses indicate that from the parents' perspective, the majority is content with using standardized test scores to interpret their child's strengths and weaknesses. It is the intent of this action research plan to show that there are more effective procedures in depicting an accurate reflection of a student's academic abilities. Standardized tests are merely a piece of the entire assessment package and therefore should not be used independently to determine a student's ability level.

Table 5

Parent Survey Response Regarding Most Effective Assessment Practice for Sites A and B Administered September, 1998



n = 20

Table 5 illustrates the results of parent responses regarding effective assessment practices. Of the 20 responses, 13 reported parent/teacher conferences as the most effective means of reporting student performance. Four parents indicated that class assignments serve as an accurate measurement tool. Of the 20 responses, one parent stated that report cards provide useful information regarding their child's academic progress. No one reported that standardized test scores provided the most useful information about the academic ability of their child. While 72% of the parents indicated that conferences with the teacher proved to be the most useful process of communication, current procedures offer only two opportunities throughout the school year to meet with the teacher in a conference format.

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Table 6

Staff Survey Response Regarding Current Measures of Assessment for Site A, Classrooms A and B Administered September, 1998

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Current measures of reporting accurately convey a student's strengths and weaknesses.	0	2	8	2
Current measures provide parents with a clear understanding of their child's progress.	0	2	9	1
Students are able to judge and self-evaluate their work.	0	8	4	0

What forms of assessment do you currently use?					
Portfolios	Standardized Scores	Tests	Report Cards	Reflections	Work Samples
4	8	10	10	4	11

n = 12

At Site A, thirty staff surveys were administered. These surveys were created in order to determine opinion among the faculty regarding current measures of assessment. Twelve staff surveys were completed and returned. The majority of those polled, 66%, agreed that the current measures were able to accurately convey a student's strengths and weaknesses. Seventeen percent disagreed and 17% strongly agreed with the same statement. When asked whether the current measures provide parents with a clear understanding of their child's progress, 75% agreed, 17% disagreed, and 8% strongly

agreed. In contrast, a large percentage, 67%, disagreed that their students' ability to self-evaluate and judge work was fostered through the use of current tools; 33% agreed.

Of the 12 staff surveys returned, 31% reported currently using portfolios as a means of assessing their students. Sixty-nine percent are using other forms of assessment such as tests and quizzes, standardized test scores and report cards. Teachers using a portfolio system all indicated that standardized test scores did not accurately reflect their students' performance in the classroom. Of those teachers not using a portfolio system, 78% also reported that standardized tests were not an accurate assessment of their students' abilities. Of the surveys returned, 69% of the teachers stated that they would like to see alternative forms of assessment implemented in their school.

When reviewed, the responses to item four may further explain the information gathered from items numbered one through three. While the largest percentage of respondents defined tests, standardized tests and report cards as "current measures," the remainder of those polled indicated varying definitions. Although just four staff members reported that they implement portfolios as assessment tools, 84% indicated student work samples were included in current measures. The differing definitions account for the contrasting opinion among staff members. It is most important to note that while there was great discrepancy among individual definitions of current measures and their effectiveness, a majority of Site A's staff expressed a need for alternative forms of assessment.

At Site B 18 parent surveys and 6 staff surveys were administered (Appendices A and D). Of the surveys, 13 parent and six staff surveys were returned. Summaries of these surveys are presented in Tables 7, 8 and 9 below (Appendices F and G).

Table 7

Parent Survey Response Regarding Standardized Measures Of Assessment and Student Motivation for Site B Administered September, 1998

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Report cards provide a clear understanding of a child's academic performance	0	0	10	3
Child can self-evaluate and judge his/her own work	0	5	8	0
Child displays pride in his/her own work	0	6	7	0
Standardized test results provide an accurate reflection of a child's academic performance	0	5	8	0

n=13

Of the 13 parent responses, all participants stated that the current school report card accurately reflected their child's academic performance. It is important to mention that the school report cards are the main assessment tools currently being utilized at this site. The participants of this survey have had minimal experience with authentic forms of assessment.

Standardized tests provided 61% of the parents with an accurate reflection of their child's academic ability. Only 39% of the parents stated that these measure were not reflective of their child's academic abilities. These findings do not support the researcher's hypothesis. The hypothesis suggested that current measures of assessment, such as report cards or standardized tests, do not provide parents with a clear understanding of their child's academic performance or abilities. The results of the parent survey regarding current measures are felt to be a reflection of minimal experience with alternative forms of assessment.

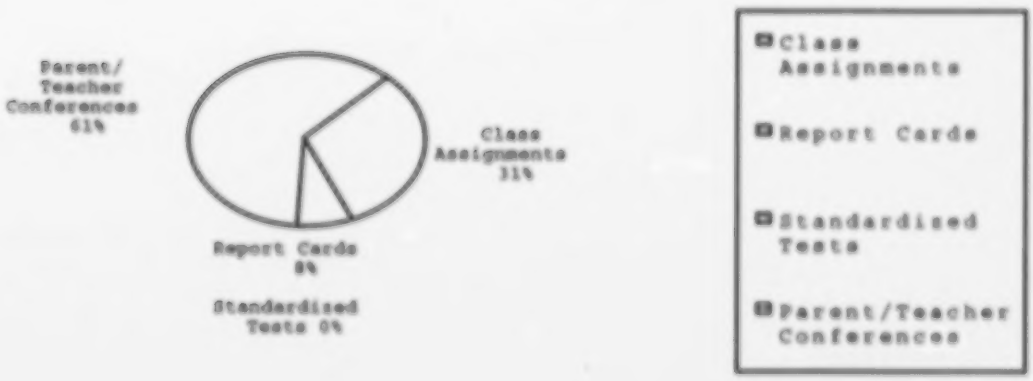
The parent survey asked parents to assess their child's ability to self-evaluate and judge his/her own work. Of the parent responses, 62% of the parents indicated that their children were capable of judging and self-evaluating their own work. Although, a significant number of parents stated that their child had the ability to self-evaluate and judge, only 54% observed their child displaying pride in his/her own work. The researcher interpreters these findings to indicate that although some children can self-evaluate, minimal pride is displayed in their final products. Therefore, students lack motivation when determining relevance in their daily tasks.

These surveys further support the evidence that parents are not provided maximum information to accurately determine their child's progress in school. The lack

of parental experience with alternative forms of assessment indicates that continual communication between home and school is crucial in the documentation of a child's abilities.

Table 8

Parent Survey Response Regarding Most Effective Assessment Practice for Site B Administered September, 1998



n=13

Table 8 illustrates the results of parent responses regarding the most effective assessment practices. Of the thirteen responses, zero percent of the population surveyed indicated that standardized tests provided an effective means of reporting student performance. Only eight percent of the parents believed that report cards were an effective tool. Of the parent responses, 61% indicated that parent/teacher conferences provided them with the most useful information regarding their child's academic

performance. Classroom assignments were considered useful to only 31% of the parents. These finding better support the researcher's hypothesis that authentic forms of assessments provide meaningful information regarding student progress over traditional forms of assessment.

Table 9

Staff Survey Responses Regarding Current Measures of Assessment for Site B

Administered September, 1998

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Current measures of reporting accurately convey a students strengths and weaknesses	0	4	2	0
Current measures provide parents with a clear understanding of their child's progress	3	2	1	0
Students are able to accurately judge and self-evaluate their work	0	3	3	0
Standardized test scores accurately reflect students performance in the classroom	6	0	0	0

n=6

The staff responses accurate support the hypothesis of the researcher. Of the surveys, 100% indicated that standardized tests do not accurately reflect a child's

academic ability in the classroom. The surveys were divided in half when asked if students were able to self-evaluate their work. Of the surveys, 66% felt that current measures accurately convey a students strengths and weaknesses.

Probable Causes

The literature suggests several underlying causes for current inadequacies in assessment measures. Traditional measures do not effectively portray student academic or developmental growth in a manner that provides accurate information for parent reporting and teacher planning.

> ...It has been proven that traditional tests are largely unreliable bases for making judgements...they rarely have much demonstrated validity, simply because they assess such a narrow range of literacy activity; they are given too infrequently and at too odd times of the year for the results, even if reliable and valid, to be of much use in planning and instruction (Stowell, 1995, p. 79).

Therefore, traditional tests cannot be used in isolation if expected to provide parents with clear and reliable information regarding their child's growth.

"One undeniable feature of the current wave of educational reform, especially at the elementary school level, is substantial criticism of traditional forms of assessment of student literacy learning. Our views of the nature of literacy have evolved faster, it seems, than our assessment practices" (Stowell, 1995, p. 78). School systems are continually updating their objectives so as to produce citizens that possess the skills necessary for success in the existing society. As a result, educators are continually improving and changing their methods of instruction in order to meet these evolving

objectives. However, traditional assessment methods have not evolved as extensively and are therefore not aligned with contemporary educational teaching and learning practices.

Stowell's project investigated the use of alternative assessment systems to provide teachers and learners with accurate, reliable depictions of students' growth and achievement. It was her belief that "evaluation of learning must be renegotiated so that the focus is shifted to learner-based assessments" (Stowell, 1995, p. 79). Assessments that are learner-based not only support the efforts and needs of students but teachers as well. According to Cole (1995), current available state and national tests produce shallow and unreliable pictures of student achievement. Such invalid information prohibits teachers from setting goals and planning instruction on an individual basis. "Standardized tests are used to rank rather than improve schools, and sort rather than educate children" (Supovitz, 1997, p. 176). The intent of this action research project is to educate the individual by improving individualized instruction, teacher planning, student assessment and reporting.

Additional evidence suggests that traditional measures do not promote student motivation and ownership. Current measures have serious limitations in showing students' attitudes and feelings toward academic tasks. There are numerous behaviors that negatively affect student performance on tests. According to Micklo (1997), examples of this may include fatigue, boredom and learning disabilities. "Most assessment instruments are not sensitive enough to demonstrate the small gains made by learners with disabilities" (Keefe, 1995, p. 66). Similar concerns are held by regular education classroom teachers in that there is little relationship between what is taught and

what is tested. "Historically, assessment is something done to the student rather than with the student" (Stowell, 1995, p. 91). If educators are to increase student motivation and ownership, assessment practices which encourage learner-centered activities must be implemented.

Information obtained from teacher surveys suggests a warning against using report cards solely to interpret student development. School objectives are not clearly stated, resulting in poor communication methods for parents. Teachers report that parents are lacking in experience with alternative assessment practices, leaving a gap between what teachers report and how the parents interpret the academic growth and development of their child. Current feedback is provided to parents through the report card, which is distributed four times a year, with the option of two parent conferences. This process is inconsistent and therefore parents are not informed on a continual basis regarding their child's school experience. "A valid assessment system provides information about the particular task on which students succeed or fail..." (Archbald and Newmann, 1988, p. XIX). Such assessment would be ongoing, formative, and authentic.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

"We as educators feel pressured to show results. The public wants to know who is winning the race, who is moving faster towards the finish. But, come to think of it, what is the finish anyway?" (Sunstein, 1992, p.36). The intent of the teacher-researchers was to investigate alternative assessment practices. Used in conjunction with current tools of assessment, such practices would support and enhance instruction and communication. In order to do so, the nature of these practices would be ongoing and evaluative rather than summative. As our philosophies and teaching practices evolve, we want to examine assessment tools that emphasize the value of the individual rather than focusing on competitive, standardized norms. "Political decisions about testing, schooling, curriculum and teacher competencies give way to sounder educational principles…More significant nonmeasurable objectives can also be documented using a variety of reliable sources and techniques" (Costa, Kallick, 1992, p. 279). A comprehensive portfolio program is a technique based on sounder educational principles.

> The concept of portfolios is driven by attempts to approach the issue of assessment in a manner that is responsive to what students are doing; represents

> the range of activities in which they are involved; documents the processes they have enlisted, their growth, and their effort; and represents the range of proficiencies that students demonstrate (Stowell, 1995, p. 85).

By implementing such a portfolio program, all students' needs are met on an individual basis. Through teacher/student bi-weekly conferences, valuable information that enhances instruction and teacher reporting is gained and reflected upon. The student is therefore constantly involved in the process of determining his/her own strengths and weaknesses, which enables him/her to become focused on how to more specifically improve his/her areas of academia. Manzo (1996) reported that portfolios are a rich source of pinpointing a student's specific skills and knowledge. Current ideology suggests that having students involved and aware of this information will help them to work through learning difficulties provided with an open line of positive communication with the teacher. Students thereby become more actively involved in the curriculum due to its individualized nature and are motivated to achieve higher standards. A study conducted by the National Center for Research on Evaluation Standards and Student Testing found that educators felt that a portfolio program "had led to positive changes in curriculum and a greater understanding of student abilities" (Rothman, 1992, p. 3).

According to Stowell, (1995) a portfolio program is to be used in helping teachers, parents, and students to better meet a wide variety of instructional needs. Each month, students bring their portfolios home to conference with their families regarding their work samples. Parents are then asked to report on the success of the family conference. In addition to family conferences, parents are invited to the school in order to meet with teachers and students together to discuss the student's strengths and

weaknesses. "The portfolio should exist to give teachers and parents a tangible record of each student's weaknesses and strengths, information they need to guide the student's future studies" (Putting Portfolios to the Test, www.edweek.org htbin fastweb, 1993, p. 4). Rather than sending a computerized printout of a standardized, norm-based test score home to parents, a comprehensive portfolio conference will provide parents with valuable information regarding their student's performance over a long period of time. A personal conference with narrative summaries of student work will benefit parents with more individualized information regarding their student.

According to Hewitt (1993), the key to a successful portfolio program is reaching the goal of teachers learning from one another. Student portfolios are a wealth of ideas and information that teachers can learn from in other classrooms. If a teacher is struggling with successfully teaching a certain topic or learning objective, he/she can view a portfolio in another classroom to see the level at which other groups are performing. "They can better imagine what their students might be capable of" (Hewitt, as in Putting Portfolios to the Test, 1993). A portfolio program gives teachers the opportunity to collaborate, discuss and reflect on academic projects and student performance rates. Hewitt (1993) stated that teachers at small meetings are discussing how much can be accomplished when their students are given authentic work to complete at high standards of learning. Comparing student performance levels from classroom to classroom is beneficial for teacher reporting whereas comparing district and state performance levels has a tendency to raise questions of validity, ethics and fairness.

Standardized testing takes place during a specific time of the school year and is given under an atmosphere of stress and tension. Students may not necessarily perform

at their highest ability level on a designated day and therefore standardized testing may not accurately portray their true academic qualities.

> Thought to paint a truer picture of student achievement than traditional tests, portfolios are a key to the New Standards project, a consortium of some of the nation's most reform-minded states and school districts that is [sic] working to build a national system of standards and assessments (MacArthur Foundation, 1995, p.1).

Administrators and educators must ask themselves the purpose behind standardized testing and whether or not the traditional methods of gathering national scores and data have been successful. Teachers do not educate their students in an environment of silent paper-and-pencil activities because they have learned that students will not perform at their highest ability level under those circumstances. Why, then, do we base a nation's level of knowledge off of a computerized scorecard? According to Cross (1993), teachers value the portfolio system as the most successful method of monitoring a student's progress and rate them much more useful than standardized reports. Portfolios are more specifically aligned to the school's curriculum and are an educationally sound method of assessing student ability levels.

"As we acknowledge our new approaches, it comes clearer and clearer that we must rethink our old methods of assessment and evaluation" (Sunstein, 1992, p.36). Currently in our classrooms, authentic assessment is not required. For the purpose of district accountability, teachers are required to evaluate their students based on standardized measures. Mandatory assessments include local district assessments, report cards, state assessments and standardized ability tests. These measures do not

consistently portray a student's ability and therefore lack validity. According to Stowell, (1995) assessment should reflect the following:

- A constructivist view of learning, teaching, and knowing.
- Assessment practices aligned with teaching and learning practices.
- Assessment practices that reflect what teachers value.
- Assessment practices that engage students in ongoing learning (review, reflection, evaluation, and goal-setting).
- Assessment practices that engage teachers and students in a partnership.
- Assessment practices that are grounded in real work rather than artificial measures.
- Assessment practices that are developmental and individualized rather than categorical and standardized.

Through the implementation of a portfolio program, teachers are able to assess a student's progress on an ongoing basis. In addition, the progress evaluated is relative to daily instruction and personalized goals. The practices involved in using portfolios are focused on authentic work samples and thereby provide a clear picture of the contents of a school's curriculum. "In a comprehensive examination of the lack of congruence between the assumptions that underlie measurement-based approaches to assessment and whole language teaching goals and practices, Cambourne and Turbill (1990) explain how critical it is to match systems of evaluation and instruction" (Lamme, Hysmith, 1991, p.629). Evaluating students with authentic work samples fosters comfort by utilizing familiar teaching tools. This form of assessment allows the student to be an active participant in the evaluation process.

According to Hysmith and Lamme (1991), students have difficulty interpreting letter grades. Often their impression is that grades have been given by the teacher rather than earned individually. Portfolios enable students to participate in the selection and evaluation of their work.

> With a portfolio, a student works constantly, collecting and selecting from her own work, reflecting about what she's learned, and projecting her own goals. With a portfolio, a student can introduce herself, can show 'this is me.' An outside judge cannot evaluate a student's portfolio without asking the student what's in it, why it's there, and what it has to do with her literacy. With these kinds of portfolios, teachers learn about their students from them (Sunstein, 1992, p.36).

The processes involved in portfolio assessment give the student the responsibility of identifying his/her own strengths and weaknesses. Measurable growth can be seen by the student through his/her participation. "The process of selecting samples of one's own work and assembling them into a portfolio is profoundly important to children. We have also learned that all children have a natural ability and desire to tell their story through the contents of the portfolio" (Hebert, 1998, p. 583). Students are given the opportunity to examine their achievement and progress. Such examination encourages student ownership and fosters independence in his/her learning. A connection is made between the effort put into a project and the resulting grade that is given.

The implementation of a comprehensive portfolio program entails frequent usage and maintenance. Students maintain their portfolios by regularly selecting completed work samples. The process of self-selection requires students to replace existing samples

with improved work. Samples may also be chosen by others participating in the portfolio program. These participants may include the classroom teacher, family members, specialists and peers. All participants, including students are required to reflect on selected work. The idea behind reflection tags is to place value and state reasons for including a specific piece of work in the portfolio. "Attaching meaning to the contents of the portfolio contributes the he child's metacognitive growth" (Hebert, 1998, p. 583).

Placing students at the center of the assessment process fosters individual motivation regarding the amount of effort placed in learning tasks. The student knows he/she is an integral part of evaluating his/her work, thereby empowering him/her in a partnership between him/herself and the teacher. Stowell's (1995) experience has been that most students enjoy the opportunity to develop a partnership with the teacher for the purpose of assessing their progress and developing new goals. This partnership increases the frequency of positive relations for all involved. Students enthusiastically share their collections displaying awareness and pride for the progress they have accomplished. "With the introduction of portfolios come some major shifts in teacher professionalism the role of classroom-grounded assessment data and student empowerment" (Stowell, 1995, p. 93).

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of the implementation of portfolios in the classroom during the period of September 1998 to January 1999, the targeted students will increase their level of academic motivation as well as understanding of assessment scores. Researchers implementing the portfolio program will report more thorough and successful individualized planning for students. Parents will increase their level of understanding

regarding student assessment scores. These objectives will be measured by portfolio conferences, teacher-parent-student conferences, and surveys given to students and parents.

In order to accomplish the project objectives, the following processes are necessary:

- A comprehensive portfolio program will be implemented into the classrooms.
- Regularly scheduled portfolio conferences will take place between the teacher and student, student and student, and parent and student.
- Students will regularly reflect upon their work and "tag" their work samples to be included in the portfolio.
- Periodic surveys will be sent to parents regarding their understanding of current assessment measures and scores.

Project Action Plan

Week 1
1. Introduce portfolio process to students with various activities. 2. Send home parent letter describing intervention with survey attached (Appendices H, I, J, A)
Week 2
1. Analyze data collected from parent surveys (Appendices C, E, F). 2. Conduct sample reflection exercises (Appendix K). 3. Model selection of work sample process to students.
Week 3
1. First bi-weekly student teacher conference (with tagging of work samples) (Appendix L). 2. Curriculum Night: Introduce portfolios to parents and address question topics from survey.
Week 4
1. Add student work sample with reflection. 2. Send portfolio home for first family conference/reflection (Appendix M). 3. Administer student reflection assignment regarding family conference activity.
Week 5
1. Conduct bi-weekly student teacher conferences with tagging of work. 2. Introduce peer conferencing to students.
Week 6
1. Conduct "Portfolio Check-Up" (Inject/Eject work samples). 2. Introduce and implement assessment rubrics (Appendices N, O).
Week 7
1. Add student sample with reflection. 2. Conduct bi-weekly student teacher conferences with tagging of work.

Week 8
1. Conduct "Portfolio Check-Up" (Inject/Eject work samples) 2. Peer Conferences 3. Send portfolio home for second family conference/reflection.
Week 9
1. Conduct bi-weekly student/teacher conferences with tagging of work. 2. Prepare for Student/Teacher/Parent Conference Night. 3. Conduct mock student/teacher/parent conferences.
Week 10
1. Conduct Student/Teacher/Parent Conference Night.
Week 11
1. Send home parent surveys regarding Conference Night (Appendix P). 2. Conduct bi-weekly student/teacher conferences with tagging of work.
Week 12
1. Add student work sample with reflection. 2. Conduct peer conferences. 3. Conduct "Portfolio Check-Up" (Inject/Eject work samples).
Week 13
1. Conduct bi-weekly student/teacher conferences with tagging of work.
Week 14
1. Send portfolio home for third family conference/reflection.

Week 15
1. Conduct bi-weekly student/teacher conferences with tagging of work. 2. Conduct "Portfolio Check-Up" (Inject/Eject work samples).
Week 16
1. Send home final parent survey regarding the portfolio intervention program (Appendix Q). 2. Conduct final student reflections regarding the portfolio intervention program.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, students will be interviewed and scoring rubrics will be developed. Parents will be surveyed and an open line of communication will be established. Researchers will determine the effects of individualized planning through the portfolio program.

CHAPTER 4

Project Results

Historical Description of the Intervention

School A, Classroom A

It was the intention of the teacher-researchers to explore the benefits of the implementation of a comprehensive portfolio program in elementary and middle school classrooms. As a result of this implementation, teacher-researchers were seeking evidence of improved parent communication, student motivation, and assessment of student academic growth. In May 1998, a specific action research intervention plan was developed using portfolios as the main exploratory tool. The summer months were spent reviewing literature regarding best practices for assessment measures in order to define the probable cause for inconclusive assessment information in education. Intervention strategies were specifically designed and planned to begin in August 1998.

A summary of the events included in the intervention implemented in Classroom A follows. In September of 1998, the process of portfolios was introduced to students in Classroom A through a variety of activities that included protocol for teacher work sample selection as well as student selection of artifacts. Parents received an outline of the action plan as well as a letter discussing the intervention and its objectives. Finally,

parents were surveyed prior to the onset of the portfolio program in order to elicit their opinions regarding the effectiveness of current measures of evaluation. Throughout the month, students participated in reflection exercises, self-selection opportunities, and organizational tasks involved. During the last two weeks of September, the first student/teacher conference took place. At this time the process of work selection was reviewed. To this point several assessment pieces had been included in the portfolio including: a running record, a S.T.A.R. report, fluency test, anecdotal records, oral and written math "pre-test" and many informal student surveys regarding strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes. These items made it possible to conduct the first "goal setting" session between the teacher-researcher and each student in classroom A. During the last week of September, parents were introduced to portfolios at Curriculum Night.

The first week of October the portfolios were sent home for the first "Family Conference." At this time, the teacher-researcher found it necessary to create a "Family Home Conferencing Report" in order to facilitate effective conferencing at home. Students continued to select work, organize, create and conference using their portfolios throughout the month. During the third week of October student "tagging" was introduced. Metacognitive exercises and activities were implemented at this time in order to promote student reflection.

Peer conferencing began in November. This included lessons on social skills and cooperative grouping exercises. The second week of November included a "portfolio check-up" in order to inject and eject work samples. The action plan had scheduled the introduction of assessment during this month. The teacher-researcher deemed this activity inappropriate at that time due to the need for peer conferencing opportunities. The

portfolios were sent home for a second family conference during the second week of November. At this point all portfolios included several authentic assessment pieces across all subject areas. Each portfolio contained at least twelve pieces of which four were student selected. In addition, the teacher-researcher prepared personalized goals for each individual.

The parents in Classroom A were asked to complete a goal setting exercise at home with their child. The exercise involved parental input and student input regarding goals for the second quarter. This particular home conference was carried out in order to prepare for parent/teacher/student conferences to be held the final week of November. Prior to parent/teacher/student conferences, students were given several opportunities for peer conferencing and mock conferences. By the time conferences approached, the following items were included in each individual's portfolio: student selected work samples, teacher selected work samples, student "tags", teacher "tags", two home family conferencing reports, one goal setting exercise, one set of second quarter "personalized" goals, a minimum of 20 "kind compliments" written by classmates, as well as numerous assessments including the school report card. Student/parent/teacher conferences were held the last week in November. The portfolio was the focus of the conference and was used by all parties.

By the tenth week of the intervention, all processes involved had been introduced and reinforced. These processes including family conferencing, tagging, goal setting, curriculum assessments, informal assessments (running records, anecdotal notes;), "kind compliment" exercises, inject/eject sessions continued from December through January. Upon the sixteenth week of the intervention, the parent post survey was administered.

collected and tabulated. The purpose of the post survey was to determine the opinion of parents regarding the intervention and its objectives. The results the surveys administered are presented in the following section.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

School A, Classroom A

In order to evaluate the influence of portfolio assessment on parent/teacher communication, student growth and student motivation, the parents of students in classroom A were surveyed regarding the effectiveness of portfolios in improving the aforementioned factors. Table ten illustrates the results of surveys administered in September prior to the onset of the action plan. An analysis of the two tables can be found at the conclusion of Table 11.

Table 10

Parent Survey Response Regarding Standardized Measures of Assessment for Site A, Classroom A, Administered September, 1998

September Preservey 25 Administered/21 Completed	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school report card provides a clear understanding of my child's academic performance in school.		8	11	3
Teacher graded tests and assignments provide me with a clear understanding of my child's academic performance in school.		3	14	19
Teacher graded tests and assignments give my child a clear understanding of their academic strengths and weaknesses.		4	13	4
My child is able to self evaluate and judge their own work.		14	7	0
My child displays pride in his/her work.		1	10	10
Standardized test results provide me with an accurate reflection of my child's academic abilities.		13	8	1
My child's performance on tests accurately reflects their performance in school.		10	10	1
Which of the following provides you with the most helpful information about your child's academic abilities and school performance. Please rank by importance.	Report Card	Stand. Test Scores 1	Conferences 14	Class Assignments 7

n = 21

Table 11 presents the data collected from the "Parent Post Survey." The post survey was developed by the teacher-researcher to gather parental opinion about portfolios as a supplemental means of assessment. The post survey was administered and its results were tabulated in January of 1999. Twenty-five surveys were administered in classroom A. Twenty-two parents completed and returned the survey.

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Table 11

Parent Survey Regarding Effects of Portfolio Program for Site A, Classroom A, Administered January, 1999

Presurvey Results January 1999 25 Administered/22 Completed	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The portfolio aids in understanding report card.			11	11
Portfolio provides a clearer understanding of child's academic performance.			11	11
Portfolio provides a clearer understanding of academic strengths and weaknesses.			11	11
With portfolio, child is able to self-evaluate own work.		2	7	13
Portfolio conferences at home have been beneficial.			6	16

n = 22

Initially, results from the presurvey did not present strong evidence to suggest that parents were concerned with the current school report card. However, comparison of the data received from both the pre and post survey would illustrate a shift in parental opinion. On the presurvey, 52% agreed that the school report card was capable of clearly portraying their child's performance in school: 38% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed. In comparison, the post survey would indicate a large percentage of the respondents valued portfolios as a supplemental measure of assessment. Fifty-nine percent of parents strongly agreed and 40% agreed that the portfolio provided a clearer understanding of their child's report card. On the presurvey, parents were asked whether or not they believed standardized test scores were able to accurately reflect their child's performance in school. Sixty-one percent of parents reported that they did not believe standardized scores were capable of doing so. Furthermore, the presurvey indicated that 50% of parents disagreed with the statement "My child's performance on curriculum based tests accurately reflects their performance in school." In contrast, 50% of parents

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strongly agreed and the remaining 50% agreed that student portfolios provided a clearer understanding of their student's academic strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, the post survey indicated that 50% strongly believed that portfolios had accurately reflected their child's performance in school and 50% agreed.

It is important to note the role of the portfolio in this intervention. The current framework for assessment was upheld. Portfolio assessment pieces were designed to compliment and enhance current reporting strategies. The intent of the teacher-researcher was to supplement, not replace, the current measures. The comparison of pre and post survey information supports the teacher-researcher's belief that implementing a portfolio program such as this project would in fact improve the validity of current reporting in terms of student performance and ability.

The post survey also sought to poll parent opinion on the subject of student reflection, motivation and self-evaluation. On the presurvey, 66% reported that their child was unable to self evaluate and judge their own work. Comparatively, post survey results indicated 59% percent of parents would now strongly agree that through the use of portfolios their child was now able to self-evaluate and judge their own work.

Post survey findings prove the heightened value parents place on the use of portfolios versus what was current; standardized test scores and the school report card. Seventy-two percent agreed that the at-home portfolio conferences had been beneficial thus far. Finally, 77% of the parents strongly agreed that they would like their child to continue to use portfolios in the next school year, and the remaining 22% agreed. Additional comments included by parents on the postsurvey were: "the portfolio gives me a much better idea of how my child is doing in each subject…," "the portfolio gives a

focus through goals…," "my child loves sharing their tags, she really makes significant comment about her abilities…" These comments as well as others included on the post survey uphold the teacher-researcher's opinion that portfolio assessment when used as a supplemental measure can reinforce parental understanding of academic growth by improving communication and clear illustration of progress.

Historical Description of the Intervention

School A, Classroom B

In September 1998, the third grade students at Site A, Classroom B were first introduced to the portfolio system through various activities centered around ownership, pride, and accountability of student work. Binders were distributed and the students were able to design their own cover for the front of them. A letter was distributed to parents at Curriculum Night for the targeted site describing the portfolio program and the benefits that can be observed through their use (Appendix I). A survey regarding attitudes toward current assessment measures was attached to this letter (Appendix A). Survey results were compiled and tallied by the end of September.

During the latter half of September 1998, students in this classroom were taught how to reflect upon work completed. Various reflection formats were introduced and the students chose which forms they felt the most comfortable using. Students could choose from day to day which format they wanted to use. Samples of these reflection forms can be found in Appendix K. Reflections could be based on a specific item completed or something that happened throughout the school day. Also during this time, students were shown the process of selecting work samples to be included in their portfolio. In this

early phase of the portfolio program, the teacher-researcher was modeling selection of student samples rather than allowing the students to begin choosing their own pieces. It was the intention of the teacher-researcher to stress the importance of careful selection and reflection of academic work.

Students were involved in their first portfolio conference in the third week of the program. This conference took place with the teacher-researcher with emphasis on teaching the student how to peer-conference without the help of the teacher. Prior to the conference, students were given a question guide to complete regarding the pieces that were in the portfolio, their feelings toward the pieces and what they considered to be their current strengths and weaknesses in school. Students then used this guide to lead their conference with the teacher-researcher as well as tagging several self-selected pieces of work that were already included in the portfolio. Samples of the question guide and various "tags" can be found in Appendices O and L.

During the first week of October 1998, students were given five pieces of work that had been completed and assessed. They were asked to choose two of the five pieces to be included in their portfolio. Students then chose a reflection format to explain their reasons for choosing the work samples. Once the work samples had been placed in the portfolio, students tagged them and added their reflection page to the appropriate section of their portfolio. Students then completed a question guide and chose a partner with whom to have a peer conference. This activity deviated from the original intervention action plan due to the students' comfort level with their portfolios. The teacher-researcher believed the students had reached an understanding of the importance of their portfolios and felt peer conferencing could be introduced sooner than originally planned.

During the peer conference, the student listening to the conference took guided notes regarding what the peer reported about the contents of the portfolio. These notes formed the outline of what the student would use to hold a family conference using their portfolio. An example of the guided notes can be seen in Appendix O.

After the outline notes had been finalized, portfolios were sent home with the students in order to conduct a family conference. Parents had been informed about these conferences at Curriculum Night in September and had been given a question guide to follow during the student's presentation of his/her portfolio. A second copy of this guide was sent home along with the student's portfolio. Once the portfolio conferences had been conducted, students completed a reflection activity regarding the success of their family conference time. Goals were set to improve the conferences and students wrote about their interpretation of how their parents responded to their presentation.

By the end of October, students had become familiar with the pattern of holding portfolio conferences on a bi-weekly basis. A routine had been set of completing reflections for the work samples being added to the portfolio, preparing for a conference by tagging selected pieces and completing a question guide, and holding a conference with a peer (or the teacher-researcher) taking guided notes according to what was said throughout the conference time. At this time, the teacher-researcher introduced the process of a "portfolio check-up" by demonstrating how to inject new pieces of work while ejecting samples for which students did not feel strongly. Students learned the value of quality versus quantity and participated in their first "portfolio check-up."

While the teacher-researcher had been using assessment rubrics since the beginning of the school year, students were now introduced to completing their own

rubrics in order to assess themselves. In order to improve the students' ability to determine their academic strengths and weaknesses, the teacher-researcher felt strongly about the students conducting regular self-assessments regarding their success level on various activities. For selected assignments, students completed a self-assessment followed by the teacher-researcher completing a copy of the same rubric. A conference was then held to compare the two rubrics and set goals for the student to improve on future assignments. Copies of both rubrics were placed in the portfolio along with the assignment.

In the month of November, students prepared to take part in Student/Teacher/Parent Conferences. Mock conferences were held with the teacher and another peer in a setting similar to what the student would experience on the night of the actual conferences. Students conducted a "portfolio check-up" with the injecting and ejecting of self-selected work samples. Tags were added to new pieces and reflections were completed regarding attitudes that students held for their own academic growth thus far in the school year. On the night of Student/Teacher/Parent Conferences, students came to school with their parents and led the conference using an outline as a guide. The teacher-researcher then reviewed the student's report card with the parent and student involved in the discussion. Students and parents were encouraged to ask questions and discuss goals for the student to reach in the upcoming academic quarter. Parents were allowed to request time with the teacher-researcher without the student's involvement, however, no parents made this request. Surveys regarding the success of the conference night were sent home to parents and results were tallied by the end of November. A sample of the conference survey can be seen in Appendix P.

By the third week of November, the comprehensive portfolio program had been completely implemented. Throughout the months of December and January, students continued to peer conference, self-evaluate and select work samples, reflect on academic growth, and conduct "portfolio check-ups." The portfolio was sent home for a third family conference in the fourteenth week of the intervention action plan. In the final week of the intervention, parent surveys were conducted in order to collect post data regarding the portfolio program. These results were tallied by the end of January. Samples of the post parent surveys and results are located in Appendices Q and S.

Presentation of Analysis and Results

School A, Classroom B

In order to assess the effects of the implementation of a portfolio program, data which was gathered at the onset of the action research was compared to data collected at the closing of the research period. The following tables are compilations of the pre and post survey information gathered. An analysis of these tables will follow.

Table 12

Parent Survey Response Regarding Standardized Measures of Assessment for Site A, Classroom B Administered September, 1998

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Report card provides clear understanding of child's academic performance.	1	3	8	7
Tests and assignments provide clear understanding of child's academic performance.	0	2	11	7
Tests and assignments give child a clear understanding of strengths/weaknesses.	0	2	13	5
Child is able to self-evaluate work.	0	8	8	3
Child displays pride in their work.	0	0	7	12

Which provides the most helpful information regarding child's academic abilities?	Report Card	Teacher Conferences	Assign-ments	Standardized Scores
	1	13	4	0

n = 19

Table 13

Parent Survey Regarding Effects of Portfolio Program for Site A, Classroom B

Administered January, 1999

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Portfolio aids in understanding report card.	2	1	18	4
Portfolio provides a clearer understanding of child's academic performance.	1	1	14	9
Portfolio provides a clearer understanding of academic strengths/ weaknesses.	1	2	16	7
With portfolio, child is able to self-evaluate work.	0	1	14	8
Portfolio conferences at home have been beneficial.	0	1	13	9
Involving child in Parent/ Teacher conferences has been beneficial.	2	1	8	10

n = 25

While there did not appear to be an overwhelming concern regarding current measures of assessment prior to the implementation of the portfolios, postsurvey results indicate that the program has had positive effects in understanding the assessment of a student. Both the pre and post surveys were given to the parents of 24 third grade

students. Twenty responses were returned from the presurvey, and 25 responses were returned with the postsurvey.

In the presurvey, parents were asked to report on the understanding of their child's academic performance through the interpretation of the school report card. Of the survey responses, 79% either agreed or strongly agreed that the report card did provide a clear understanding of their child's academic performance. Twenty-one percent of the responses indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Comparing this information with the postsurvey data, parents were asked to report whether the portfolio aided in the understanding of their child's report card. From the 25 responses returned, 88% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that the portfolio did aid in interpreting the information provided in the academic report card. Only 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. In analyzing these data, the researcher has shown that the portfolio has the ability to serve as a valid tool for interpreting information given on an academic report card.

It is important to stress that the intent of the researcher is not to replace the academic report card, rather the goal is to use the portfolio as a piece of the assessment framework. While the report card provides parents with a general overview of their child's academic growth and development, the portfolio serves as more of an explanatory tool and gives more specific examples and information to the parents. Due to the majority of the parents reporting that the portfolio assists in the interpretation of the report card information, it has been shown to improve communication between the home and school environments.

Using tests and assignments as a source of understanding their child's academic performance, parents were asked to report in the presurvey on the success of this method as a tool of communication. In studying the results of the presurvey, the researcher found that 90% of those responding either agreed or strongly agreed that this was a successful method of assessment reporting. Similarly, parents were asked in the postsurvey to report on whether they agreed or disagreed that portfolios provided a clearer understanding of their child's academic performance. Postsurvey results reported that 92% of the responses indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. While assessed classroom assignments and tests do provide parents with information regarding the success level their child is experiencing in the classroom; portfolios show more of an accurate and complete picture. As students place work samples in the portfolio binder, comparisons can be made as to the growth that is being seen between new and old pieces of work. Students, teachers, and parents all have the ability to view each item in chronological order and draw conclusions regarding the quality of work that is being done throughout the school year. Research has shown that portfolios do indeed improve communication among everyone involved concerning academic performance in school.

Regarding student academic strengths and weaknesses, parents were surveyed prior to beginning the action intervention plan on their opinions for the information received through graded tests and assignments. This category of data differs from that of academic performance because at this point the researcher is differentiating between a general overview of a student's level of success and the more specific areas in which the child is excelling/lacking. Of the responses returned, 90% of the parents reported that

they either agreed or strongly agreed that graded tests and assignments provided an understanding of their child's academic strengths and weaknesses. Postsurvey results proved interesting in that the responses to the statement, "Portfolio provides a clearer understanding of academic strengths/weaknesses," dropped two percentage points from the presurvey results to 88% of the parents either agreeing or disagreeing with that statement. The researcher has concluded that there is little difference in understanding a student's academic strengths and weaknesses when viewing graded tests and assignments singly or when they are placed into a comprehensive portfolio. However, the purpose of a portfolio is not only to report assessment grades, but also to explain the reasoning behind such grades and to set goals with the student for future improvement in the selected subject area. While there is a direct correlation between the questions asked on the pre and post survey, it is important to note that on the postsurvey, parents were being asked to agree or disagree with the portfolio providing a "clearer" understanding of their child's academic strengths and weaknesses. Data collected has shown that the portfolio does help to understand the reasoning for grades posted to classroom assignments and tests.

Improving student motivation and ownership of work samples are goals of the portfolio program, as stated in the objectives of this research. In the presurvey data, 40% of the parents disagreed, 45% agreed, and 15% strongly agreed that students had the ability to self-evaluate their work. In this category of research, an important finding was made when comparing pre and post survey data. Ninety-five percent of the parents reported in the postsurvey that when using the portfolio their child was able to self-evaluate their work samples. The process of goal setting and reflection on academic

work is an imperative piece of a successful comprehensive portfolio program and the results show the benefits of following these practices. When a student has the ability to determine their own areas to strive for improvement, they are taking ownership in their learning and therefore internalizing the importance of making progress throughout the school year. The factor of motivation for a student is naturally increased when they have reached a point of being able to use metacognition while reviewing their classroom work. Providing the student with the opportunity to create a collection of work that can be periodically reviewed allows them to observe their own growth and development over time, which also enhances the child's self-esteem. The portfolio presents a holistic approach to learning, from the actual assignment to the reflection, goal setting, and conferencing stages, which benefits the student in all areas of the school experience.

Communication between the home and school environments is a constant challenge for everyone involved in a child's education. When parents were asked in the presurvey about which forms of assessment provided them with the most helpful information, their responses follow . Six percent of the responses indicated that the report card was the most helpful tool of academic communication, 0% listed standardized tests, 22% reported graded classroom assignments, and 72% of the parents reported conferences with the teacher to be of the most use for learning about their child's academic experiences. Similarly, on the postsurvey results, parents were asked to agree or disagree with two statements: "Portfolio conferences at home have been beneficial" and "Involving the child in Parent/Teacher/Student conferences has been beneficial." Fifty-seven percent agreed and 39% strongly agreed that conducting portfolio conferences at home has proven beneficial as a communicative tool regarding their

child's academic experiences. Forty-three percent agreed and 52% strongly agreed that inviting the student to lead Parent/Teacher/Student conferences has been beneficial.

The research results regarding conferencing as the most helpful tool in communicating between the home and school environments strongly supports the use of a comprehensive portfolio program in the classroom. Providing each student with a container to collect work samples, projects, reflections, goals, and assessments that can be transported home on a regular basis allows the opportunity for parents to be consistently involved in their child's day to day activities. Placing the student at the center of this form of communication has numerous benefits in building a positive and long-lasting relationship between the child, parent, and teacher.

Results of the pre and post surveys reflect a genuinely positive list of effects in determining the reasons for developing a comprehensive portfolio program. The researcher set out to improve parent communication, individualized student planning, student motivation, and assessment of student growth. Throughout the course of the action intervention plan, each of these objectives were covered and analyzed for their rates of success. While this program proved to be time consuming and a great deal of work for teachers, students, and parents, the researcher has found an overwhelming amount of positive feedback from everyone involved.

Historical Description of the Intervention

School B

A 16-week intervention was implemented at Site B. A parent letter survey was sent home the second week of school describing the variety of assessment tools that were

going to be used over the course of the intervention. The survey was sent home with 18 students that would be participating in the portfolio assessment intervention, all of whom were eligible to receive special education services through a learning-disabled resource program. Feedback regarding student motivation and parent communication was requested.

Services to the students were primarily provided in the regular education classroom. The resource consultant and regular education teachers worked together to properly monitor student progress through a variety of teaching styles.

Of the 18 surveys administered, 13 were returned, and the data they provided was analyzed. The surveys were used to gather information to support the theory that current measures of assessment do not accurately reflect academic growth.

The portfolio process was introduced to the students during the first week of school. Sample reflection exercises provided students with experience in critiquing their own work. The process of selecting work samples was modeled to the students.

The first bi-weekly student teacher conference was held the third week of the intervention. Students reflected on the contents of their portfolios and began tagging selected work samples to prepare portfolios for Curriculum Night. At Curriculum Night, parents had the opportunity to view the contents of their child's portfolio, and to ask questions related to the surveys that were sent out the first week of the intervention.

During the fourth week of the intervention, the students added additional work samples and reflections to their portfolios. The portfolios were sent home for the first family conference, where students shared the contents of their portfolios with their families. All participants completed a reflection on the family conference which were

used to support the objectives of the intervention. Additional family conferences took place during the eighth and fourteenth week of the intervention.

Peer conferencing was introduced during the fifth week of the intervention. Original plans indicated that peer conferencing would take place once a month, but six weeks into the intervention, peer conferencing became a weekly occurrence due to student interest and comfort.

Portfolio maintenance required a significant amount of time. "Portfolio check-ups" were conducted every four weeks, and were utilized to inject and eject work samples from the portfolios.

During the sixth week of the intervention, assessment rubrics were introduced. The implementation of assessment rubrics provided documentation of student growth. The rubrics were also be used to provide parents and students with an itemized account of each assignment's objectives. Combined rubric scores resulted in report card grades for first quarter.

In preparation for parent/teacher/student conferences, students conducted mock conferences with their peers to familiarize themselves with their portfolios. Student directed parent conferences were held during the tenth week of the intervention. Parent conference surveys were sent out requesting feedback regarding student progress, report card support and student directed conference comments. Students continued to maintain their portfolios throughout the remainder of the intervention by conducting bi-weekly student/teacher conferences, "portfolio check-ups" and weekly peer-conferences.

A postsurvey regarding the portfolio program was given during the final week of the intervention. The postsurvey was comparable to the presurvey given during the first

week of the intervention. Results were analyzed and utilized to support the objectives of the intervention.

Students conducted final reflections regarding the intervention. Due to student and parent requests, the portfolio program continued through the remainder of the school year. The portfolios were utilized to document progress made on each child's individualized educational plan as well as their report cards for the remaining quarters. Assessment documentation will assist with future placement programming.

educational plan as well as their report cards for the remaining quarters. Assessment documentation will assist with future placement programming.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Site B

In order to document the effectiveness of the portfolio intervention completed at site B, pre and post-parent surveys were administered during the 16-week intervention (Appendixes A and B). Of the 18 pre-parent surveys administered, 13 were returned. Post-parent surveys were given to 18 parents, 17 were returned. Summaries of the surveys are presented in Tables 14, 15, and 16.

Table 14

Post-Parent Survey Responses Regarding Most Effective Assessment Measure for Site B Administered March, 1999

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Portfolios assist with understanding the report card	0	1	11	5
Portfolios clearly reflect academic performance	0	0	12	5
Portfolios accurately reflect student's strengths and weaknesses	0	3	9	5

n=17

The outcomes of the intervention according to the surveys, indicated that the use of a portfolios assessment program provided 94% of the parents with helpful information in interpreting their child's school report card. The portfolios provided parents with a variety of work samples that demonstrated their child's performance on daily tasks. These tasks were then utilized in forming the individual grades on the school report card.

As a result of the intervention, all parents that returned the surveys stated that the portfolios clearly reflected their child's academic performance. The quarterly family conferences assisted in keeping the parents informed in their child's daily activities. Family reflections encouraged parents input and increased communication between home and school.

The portfolios helped to identify student's individual strengths and weaknesses. The contents of the portfolio gave parents, students and teachers a variety of work samples to determine areas of strengths and weaknesses. This form of assessment helped to document the progress made to goals as they were written on the child's individual educational plan.

Table 15

Pre-Parent Survey Regarding Student Motivation for Site B Administered

September, 1998

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Ability to self evaluate	0	4	8	0
Displays pride in own work	0	3	7	3

n=13

Table 16

Post Parent Survey Regarding Student Motivation for Site B Administered

March, 1999

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Ability to self evaluate	0	0	11	6
Demonstrates enthusiasm about sharing work	0	0	9	8
Displays pride in portfolio contents	0	0	4	13

n=17

The researches indicated that student motivation was an area of concern prior to the implementation of the intervention. Researchers felt that the ability to self-evaluate was a key component in improving student motivation. The results of the pre-parent surveys indicated that only 31% of the parents viewed this as a significant area of concern. According to the post-parent survey, parents stated that after the implementation of the portfolio program all children participating in the intervention were capable of self-evaluating their work.

Parents and teachers observed an increase of pride and enthusiasm when their child shared the content of his/her portfolio. Evidence was seen during family conferences, peer conferences, parent/student/teacher conferences and through student's reflections. Originally 77% of the parents stated that their child displayed pride in their daily work. On the post-parent survey, 100% of the parents indicated this to be an accurate statement.

As a result of this intervention, portfolio assessment has shown to improve communication between home and school. The program allows ample opportunities for parent to observe the progress their child is making academically. The contents of the portfolio provide evidence that accurately support the school report card.

Parents and teachers can easily determine significant strengths and weaknesses a child may have. Significant weaknesses can be easily identified and rectified. Appropriate changes can be to a child's current individualized educational plan.

Significant growth regarding student motivation was greatly observed through the implementation of the portfolio program. An increase in student motivation improved classroom behavior, peer relations and overall academic performance in the classroom.

Conclusions

Based on the implementation of the portfolio program significant gains were noted over the sixteen week intervention period. Students demonstrated improvement in their ability to self-evaluate and judge their work. An increase in student motivation was observed through the use of the portfolios. Students displayed pride and enthusiasm when sharing the contents of their portfolios with peers, parents, and teachers. The portfolios allowed opportunities for individualized planning for all students. Clear evidence of student's strengths and weaknesses were portrayed through this intervention.

Parents reported an increase in communication between home and school. The portfolios assisted them in understanding their child's performance as stated on the school report card. The portfolios also provided parents, teachers, and students with continuous evidence of academic growth, as well as a clearer understanding of the daily classroom activities.

Recommendations

Prior to implementing a portfolio assessment program, extensive research should be conducted by the teacher. Current assessment measures should be considered when planning to implement such a program. Parents should be informed prior to starting the intervention. The purpose and objectives involved in this type of program should be stated clearly to the parents. Parental participation should be encouraged for the success of the portfolio program.

A specific organizational structure should be carefully investigated and planned to house the student's work. Ample time should be provided for the maintenance of the portfolios. Students need to be provided with weekly opportunities for conferencing with

peers and teachers. Specific processes for selection and reflection of work samples should be practiced and modeled regularly.

Conferencing involving parents, students, and teacher should take place a least two times throughout the school year. Home conferencing involving parents and students should take place quarterly.

The portfolios should accompany the school report card to assist parents in interpreting their child's academic growth. The portfolios should be considered when conducting future student placement.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Parent Survey

Dear Parents,

I am introducing portfolios as a student assessment tool. I am interested in your opinions regarding assessment of students growth and development. Please take a few minutes and fill out the following survey. I appreciate your help.

1. The school report card provides a clear understanding of my child's academic performance in school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. Teacher graded tests and assignments provide me with a clear understanding of my academic performance in school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. Teacher graded tests and assignments gives my child a clear understanding of their academic strengths and weaknesses.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. Who do you think should be involved in setting academic goals for your child?

Teacher	Parent and Teacher	Teacher, Parent and Student	Teacher and Student

5. My child is able to self evaluate and judge their own work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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6. My child displays pride in their work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. Standardized test results provide me with an accurate reflection of my child's academic abilities.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. My child's performance on tests accurately reflects their performance in school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. My child feels confident taking tests.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. Which of the following provides you with the most helpful information about your child's academic abilities and school performance. Please rank by importance.

Report Card	Standardized Test Scores	Conferences with the teacher	Class Assignments

11. Additional Comments:

_____

_____

_____

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Dear Staff,

As part of our Master's program, we are introducing portfolios in our classrooms as a student assessment tool. We are interested in your opinions regarding assessment of student growth and development. Please fill out the following survey and return it to Angela, Christine or Samantha. We appreciate your help.

Christine, Samantha and Angela

1. What forms of assessment do you currently use?(circle all that apply)

portfolios	standardized test scores	tests/quizzes
reflections	report cards	work samples

2. The current measures of reporting accurately convey a students strengths and weaknesses.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. The current measures provide parents with a clear understanding of their child's progress.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. The current measures provide opportunities for goal setting and discussion with students.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. Cumulative folders provide teachers with useful information about student performance.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. What types of information would be helpful to you as a student enters your classroom?

_____

_____

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Results of (23) completed (25) administered

Appendix C

Parent Survey

Dear Parents,

I am introducing portfolios as a student assessment tool. I am interested in your opinions regarding assessment of students growth and development. Please take a few minutes and fill out the following survey. I appreciate your help.

1. The school report card provides a clear understanding of my child's academic performance in school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	9	11	3

2. Teacher graded tests and assignments provide me with a clear understanding of my academic performance in school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	3	14	19

3. Teacher graded tests and assignments gives my child a clear understanding of their academic strengths and weaknesses.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	4	13	4

4. Who do you think should be involved in setting academic goals for your child?

Teacher	Parent and Teacher	Teacher, Parent and Student	Teacher and Student
	5	18	1

5. My child is able to self evaluate and judge their own work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	14	9	

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6. My child displays pride in their work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	11	10

7. Standardized test results provide me with an accurate reflection of my child's academic abilities.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	6	5	1

8. My child's performance on tests accurately reflects their performance in school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	10	5	1

9. My child feels confident taking tests.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	5	11	2

10. Which of the following provides you with the most helpful information about your child's academic abilities and school performance. Please rank by importance.

Report Card	Standardized Test Scores	Conferences with the teacher	Class Assignments
1	1	14	7

11. Additional Comments:

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Staff Survey
15 responses

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1				
2		17%	67%	17%
3		17%	75%	8%
4		67%	33%	

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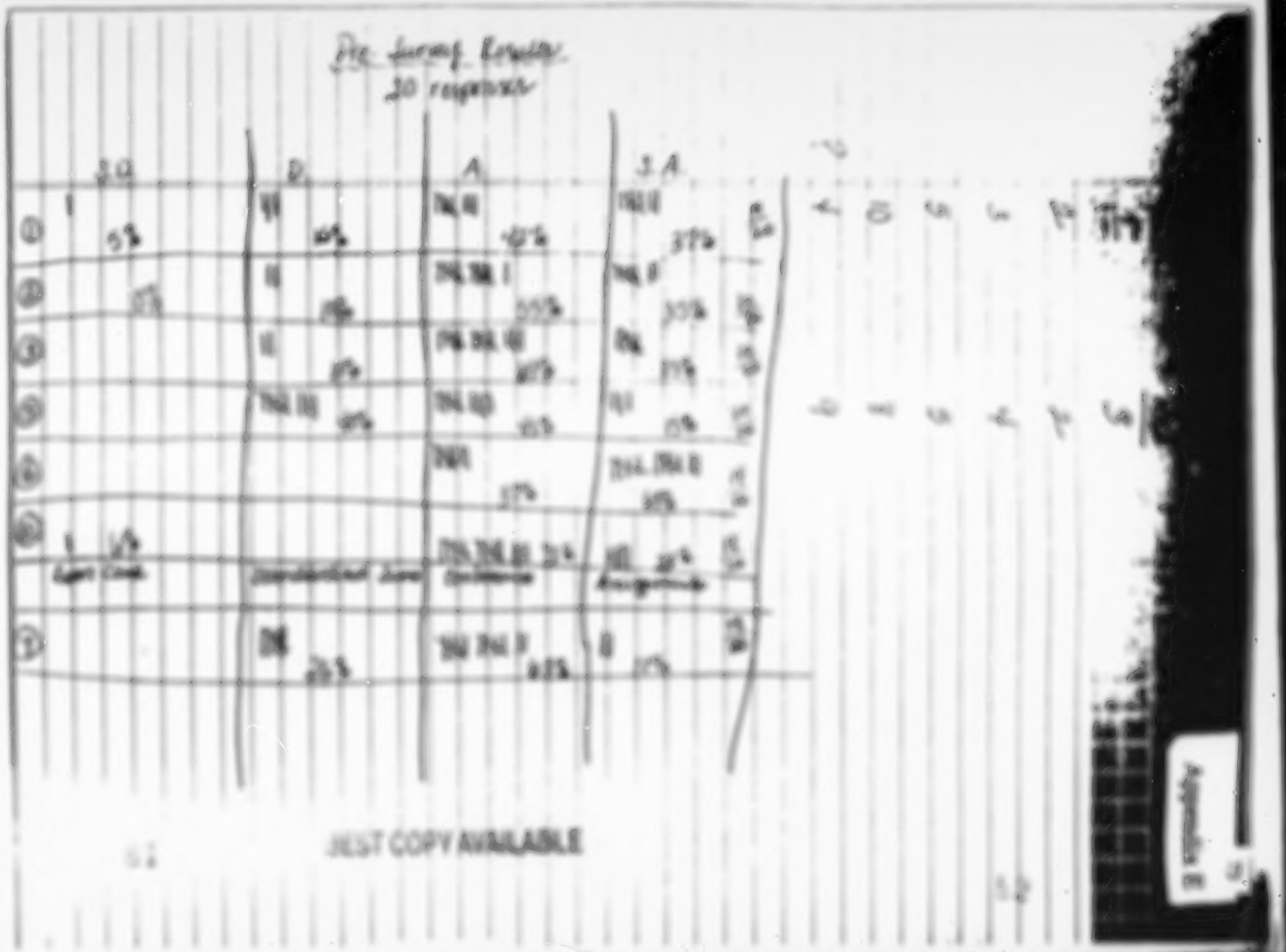
Appendix D


Pre survey Results
20 responses
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Pre Survey
Appendix F
Site B

Parent Survey

Dear Parents,

I am introducing portfolios as a student assessment tool. I am interested in your opinions regarding assessment of student's growth and development. Please take a few minutes and fill out the following survey. I appreciate your help.

1. The school report card provides a clear understanding of my child's academic performance in school

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
		10	3

2. Teacher graded tests and assignments provide me with a clear understanding of my academic performance in school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	1	8	4

3. Teacher graded tests and assignments gives my child a clear understanding of their academic strengths and weaknesses.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2	2	8	3

4. Who do you think should be involved in setting academic goals for your child?

Teacher	Parent and Teacher	Teacher, Parent and Student	Teacher and Student
	4	9	

5. My child is able to self evaluate and judge their own work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	5	8	

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6. My child displays pride in their work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	6	7	

7. Standardized test results provide me with an accurate reflection of my child's academic abilities.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	6	8	

8. My child's performance on tests accurately reflects their performance in school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	4	7	2

9. My child feels confident taking tests.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	10	1	1

10. Which of the following provides you with the most helpful information about your child's academic abilities and school performance. Please rank by importance.

Report Card	Standardized Test Scores	Conferences with the teacher	Class Assignments
1		8	4

11. Additional Comments:

_____

_____

_____

Site B - Rose Kellener Unpalone Macfarlane Munrich Munroe

76

Appendix G

Staff Teacher Survey Results

1. Forms of assessment currently being used

Portfolios	III
Stand. test	IIII
Reflections	III
Report cards	IIII
tests/quizzes	IIII

2 which forms give parents a good understanding of child's progress

Portfolios	IIII
reflections	III
test/quizzes	I
reportcards	III

3. Assessment that motivates students

Portfolios	IIII
report cards	IIII

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Dear Parent(s), August 27, 1998

It has been a great first week! I am so impressed by our group of students! They have worked really well together this week. Typically, the first week is pretty difficult for many students, especially those who are spending their first full days in school. Trying to get used to a very academic day, time away from their family, and many other apprehensions can leave a young student absolutely exhausted. Please celebrate a job well done with your student this weekend they all deserve it! I feel really fortunate to have such a wonderful class. I also know how fortunate I am to be teaching in a multiage classroom. Again, I would like to thank you for your support and trust. It's going to be a great year!

As some of you may already know I am currently completing the second year of my master's program at St. Xavier University. As part of this program I am required to complete an "Action Research Project". I have chosen assessment as my topic. This year each sutdent will compile a portfolio. This portfolio will contain work samples, teacher notes and formal assessments from across the curriculum. The portfolio will improve our communication regarding your child's progress. In addition it will offer opportunities for your child to reflect on their own work and progress while sharing it with others. Most importantly, your child's portfolio will enable me to personalize instruction for each individual. Your child and I will participate in goal setting exercises each quarter. The portfolios will be sent home for "family conferences" several times each semester. We will be talking more about our portfolio program at Curriculum Night. At that time I will provide you an outline of scheduled portfolio activities and expectations as well as some professional articles on the topic.

If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to call! I am looking forward to seeing you at Curriculum Night.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Sherrill

Saint Xavier University
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
"Improving Individualized Planning, Student Motivation, Parent Communication, and Assessment of Student Growth Through the Implementation of a Portfolio Program"

Dear Parent(s),

As you are aware, I am currently enrolled in a Masters program through Saint Xavier University. In order to graduate, I am required to conduct a research project and subsequently write a thesis.

The purpose of this study is to explore the benefits of various forms of assessment. During the time period of September 1998, to January 1999, your child will be creating a comprehensive portfolio. I ask that your role be a willingness to conference with your child regularly, complete surveys, and attend parent/teacher conferences.

As a result of using a portfolio program, your child will gain higher level thinking skills, the opportunity to discuss their work on a regular basis with teacher, peers, and parents, and increased ownership of their work.

I look forward to implementing this highly effective means of assessment. It is my hope that you will find this program rewarding for both you and your child.

Sincerely,

Consent Form

I give consent for my child, _____, to participate in the Saint Xavier Research Project. I understand that my child's name will not be disclosed and that this study will not cause risk or discomfort to my child.

_____ _____
Parent Signature **Date**

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Appendix I

August 25, 1998

Dear Parents,

Welcome to a brand new school year! My name is Samantha Ray and I will be your child's third grade teacher for the 1998-99 school year. This will be my first year at Western Trails and I am so very happy to be a part of such an excellent school district. I am excited about all of the wonderful adventures we will embark on together throughout the coming months!

This will be my fifth year teaching at the elementary level. I have taught in first through fourth grade classrooms and have always enjoyed the third grade level most. I graduated from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa and am currently attending the St. Xavier University Master's program. There are several teachers from Western Trails School that are also a part of this program and it is comforting to already know many of my colleagues on a personal level. I have quickly come to feel right at home in my new classroom!

As part of my graduation requirements from St. Xavier University, I am involved in a cooperative thesis with two other teachers. One of my partners is Mrs. Sherrill, who is teaching in one of our Multi-age classrooms this year. Many of you may be very familiar with Mrs. Sherrill. We are studying the various forms of assessment that are available to our students and have decided to explore a portfolio program in detail. We will be using this as our major tool of assessment throughout the school year. Portfolios offer outstanding opportunities for our students to grow from their experiences and take ownership in their learning process. It is also an excellent tool for communication between the home and school environment. You will be learning more about this portfolio program in the coming weeks. Enclosed you will find a permission slip that must be signed by a parent or guardian allowing your child to participate in this program. It is a requirement from St. Xavier University and must be submitted with my research results. Please sign and return this form as soon as possible.

Our classroom is arranged in cooperative tables. This means that the students sitting at a table together work as a team with a designated "table captain" each week. Each student will have a turn to be the cooperative captain on a rotating basis and will be responsible at their table for things such as organizing daily homework, collecting papers, gathering project materials, and helping the table keep its cooperative focus. To promote positive behavior, I will tally "table points" throughout the day when tables are demonstrating behaviors such as following directions, actively listening, and participating in group activities. These points will be kept throughout the week and the table with the most points at the end of the week will be able to choose from several reward certificates. Tables will be grouped together for a 4-5 week period and then rearranged to allow the students a chance to work with many children throughout the school year.

Positive discipline will be encouraged for the classroom as a whole with the use of a Marble Jar. When the entire class is "caught" being good, they will earn marbles for the

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jar. Once this jar is full, we will have a small celebration such as a movie and popcorn day. (It's a rather large jar, so it will take some time to fill it!) Additionally, I will send two "Happy Notes" home each day with students who have had a fantastic day. It may be someone who is struggling with a certain subject and works hard to improve or a student who tries their best to be extra nice all day.

Enclosed you will find a set of classroom rules, discipline steps and a contract. Please review these rules with your child and have him/her sign the contract as an agreement to follow them to the best of their ability. I ask for your signature on the "witness" line to let me know that you understand what is expected of your child.

Again, I am very excited for the school year to get rolling! If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me at 462-8936, Room #203.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Ray

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Saint Xavier University
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
"Improving Individualized Planning, Student Motivation, Parent Communication, and Assessment of Student Growth Through the Implementation of a Portfolio Program"

Dear Parents,

As you are aware, I am currently enrolled in a Masters program through Saint Xavier University. In order to graduate, I am required to conduct a research project and subsequently write a thesis.

The purpose of this study is to explore the benefits of various forms of assessments. During the time period of September 1998, to January 1999, your child will be creating a comprehensive portfolio. I ask that your role be a willingness to conference with your child regularly, complete surveys, and attend parent/teacher conferences.

As a result of using a portfolio program, your child will gain higher level thinking skills, the opportunity to discuss their work on a regular basis with teacher, peers, and parents, and increased ownership of their work.

I look forward to implementing this highly effective means of assessment. It is my hope that you will find this program rewarding for both you and your child.

Sincerely,

Consent Form

I give consent for my child, _____ to participate in the Saint Xavier Research Project. I understand that my child's name will not be disclosed and that this study will not cause risk or discomfort to my child.

_____ _____

Parent Signature Date

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Appendix J

Welcome to Jay Stream School!

Dear Parents,

Hello, my name is Angela Kanala. I'll be your child's resource teacher this school year. I will be returning within a few weeks from my maternity leave and am looking forward to meeting all of you.

I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to work closely with each child and teacher this year. I'm planning on being in the classroom not only working with individual students but also small and large groups. I hope to provide most of my service time in the regular education classroom. There will also be times when individual assistance may be provided in the resource room. These times may include 1:1 instruction, reinforcement, check in/out, or small group review.

I feel communication between home and school is very important. In the past I've used a communication folder with each of my students. This has helped me, the classroom teacher and the parents stay on top of things. Each Friday, the classroom teacher will comment on your child's overall work and behavior for the week. We will also write general comments such as upcoming meetings, homework assignments, reinforcers or just FYI's. This "Home Journal" will be sent home each Friday. Parents are asked to read our comments and write any comments or just sign so we know you have read it. The home journal should then be returned to school the following Monday. The Journal will begin the first week of school.

As part of my masters program through Saint Xavier University, I am required to conduct a research project as well as a thesis. My project and paper will be on portfolio assessment. This year I will be using portfolios to help me better assess all special education resource students. Each student will have their own portfolio. The portfolios will contain work samples from all academic areas. The classroom teacher and I will closely relate the work samples to their academic goals listed on their Individualized Educational Plan.

This form of assessment has been proven to be an excellent way to monitor and document student progress. You, as well as your child, the classroom teacher and myself will choose assignments to go into the portfolio. Some examples of what might be in your child's portfolio are tests, quizzes, rough draft writing assignments, final draft projects, and group activities.

You will have at least two opportunities this year to look through your child's portfolio. The first time will be around November, for Parent/Teacher conferences. The second time will be in early spring, for your child's annual review meeting. You are welcome to look through the portfolios at any time to assess your child's progress.

Attached you will find a consent form as well as additional information regarding portfolio assessment. Please return the consent forms as soon as possible. I know this is going to be another very productive school year, and we'll have the portfolios to prove it! Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns (422-4640).

Sincerely,

Mrs. Angela Kanala
Resource Consultant
Jay Stream School

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Saint Xavier University
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
"Improving Individualized Planning, Student Motivation, Parent Communication, and Assessment of Student Growth Through the Implementation of a Portfolio Program"

Dear Parents,

As you are aware, I am currently enrolled in a Masters program through Saint Xavier University. In order to graduate, I am required to conduct a research project and subsequently write a thesis.

The purpose of this study is to explore the benefits of various forms of assessment. During the time period of September 1998 to January 1999, your child will be creating a comprehensive portfolio. I ask that your role be a willingness to conference with your child regularly, complete surveys, and attend parent/teacher conferences.

As a result of using a portfolio program, your child will gain higher level thinking skills, the opportunity to discuss their work on a regular basis with teacher, peers, and parents, and increased ownership of their work.

I look forward to implementing this highly effective means of assessment. It is my hope that you will find this program rewarding for both you and your child.

Sincerely,

Consent Form

I give consent for my child, _____, to participate in the Saint Xavier Research Project. I understand that my child's name will not be disclosed and that this study will not cause risk or discomfort to my child.

_____ _____

Parents' Signature Date

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Name_____ Date_____

Self-Assessment of Portfolio (#1)

1. What is your favorite piece? Tell 2 specific reasons why.

_____

_____

_____

2. What is your least favorite piece? Tell 2 specific ways you could improve this piece if you were to do it over again.

_____

_____

_____

3. Tell 3 pieces of work you would like to talk about when sharing your portfolio at home. Why are these pieces important to you?

_____

_____

_____

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Portfolio Tags

If I did this again I would.....

I learned.....

My teacher chose this because .....

I liked the way I_____

My work made me think about:

I wish I would have:

This paper is impoeiant to me because...

This is something I am pe·oud of because.....

This is an example of my best work.....

This is so AWESOME because:

I could have done better if I....

This is something I worked hard on.....

Appendix M

Portfolio Conference Student Survey

Name_____ Date_____

Circle the number that best describes how you feel about your first portfolio conference with your parents.

5 = I feel really good 3 = I feel okay 1 = I feel lousy

1. I knew just what I wanted to say about each work piece in my portfolio.
   5 4 3 2 1

2. My parents listened to what I had to say about my work.
   5 4 3 2 1

3. My parents asked questions about my work and how I felt about it.
   5 4 3 2 1

4. I did a great job explaining my projects and what they were about.
   5 4 3 2 1

5. I talked about goals I have to make my work better in the future.
   5 4 3 2 1

About my portfolio conference, I would just like to say:

_____

_____

_____

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Appendix N

Peer conferencing Rubric

Student's Name: _____

1. Student can identify his/her own strengths.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. Student can identify his/her own weaknesses.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. Student selectively chooses work samples.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. Student is reflective when explaining work samples.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. Student leads conferencing with little assistance.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. Student demonstrates confidence and comfort while conferencing.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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Name_____ Date_____

Peer's Name_____

Appendix O

Peer Conference Guide

Listen to your peer as they explain their portfolio to you. Pay close attention to them and listen for the following things:

1. Your peer's strongest piece of work is

   _____ because

   _____

   _____

2. The piece your peer would do differently the second time is

   _____

   because _____

   _____

3. What your peer feels very comfortable with right now in school is

   _____

   because _____

   _____

4. A goal your peer has to improve themselves is

   _____

   They are going to accomplish this by

   _____

Conference Survey

Please answer the following questions regarding our recent Parent/Teacher Conferences.

1. Did your child's Parent/Teacher conference provide you with enough information regarding your child's progress thus far this year? YES NO
Comments:

---

2. Did you find it beneficial to have your child be a part of the conference? YES NO
Comments:

---

3. Did your child's portfolio support his/her report card assessment? YES NO
Comments:

---

4. What additional information would you like to see provided at Parent/Teacher Conference Night?

Appendix Q

Dear Parents,

I am currently in the process of "wrapping up" my research for my master's thesis regarding our portfolios. While we will continue to use our portfolios on a regular basis and bring them home for conferences, I would appreciate you filling out this survey to help in the last stage of gathering data. Thank you so much for all you have done to make this a wonderful opportunity for your child!

Please place a check mark in the appropriate box that describes your opinion.

1. *My child's portfolio provides me with an improved understanding of the kinds of activities that are taking place in the classroom.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. *My child's portfolio provides me with a clearer understanding of his/her academic performance in school.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. *My child's portfolio has aided me in understanding his/her report card.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. *My child's portfolio provides me with a clearer understanding of his/her academic strengths and weaknesses.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. *In using the portfolio, my child is able to self-evaluate and judge their own work.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. *My child is enthusiastic about sharing their portfolio during their conference time with me.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. *My child displays pride in the work that is included in the portfolio.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. *Having portfolio conferences at home with my child has been beneficial thus far.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. *I enjoyed having my child participate in the fall Parent/Teacher conferences.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. *I would like to see my child continue to use a portfolio in the next school year.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please add any additional comments below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Classroom 1 : Results

Post Survey

Dear Parents,

Appendix R

I am currently in the process of "wrapping up" my research for my master's thesis regarding our portfolios. While we will continue to use our portfolios on a regular basis and bring them home for conferences, I would appreciate you filling out this survey to help in the last stage of gathering data. Thank you so much for all you have done to make this a wonderful opportunity for your child!

Please place a check mark in the appropriate box that describes your opinion.

1. *My child's portfolio provides me with an improved understanding of the kinds of activities that are taking place in the classroom.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. *My child's portfolio provides me with a clearer understanding of his/her academic performance in school.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. *My child's portfolio has aided me in understanding his/her report card.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. *My child's portfolio provides me with a clearer understanding of his/her academic strengths and weaknesses.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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5. *In using the portfolio, my child is able to self-evaluate and judge their own work.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. *My child is enthusiastic about sharing their portfolio during their conference time with me.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. *My child displays pride in the work that is included in the portfolio.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. *Having portfolio conferences at home with my child has been beneficial thus far.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. *I enjoyed having my child participate in the fall Parent/Teacher conferences.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. *I would like to see my child continue to use a portfolio in the next school year.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

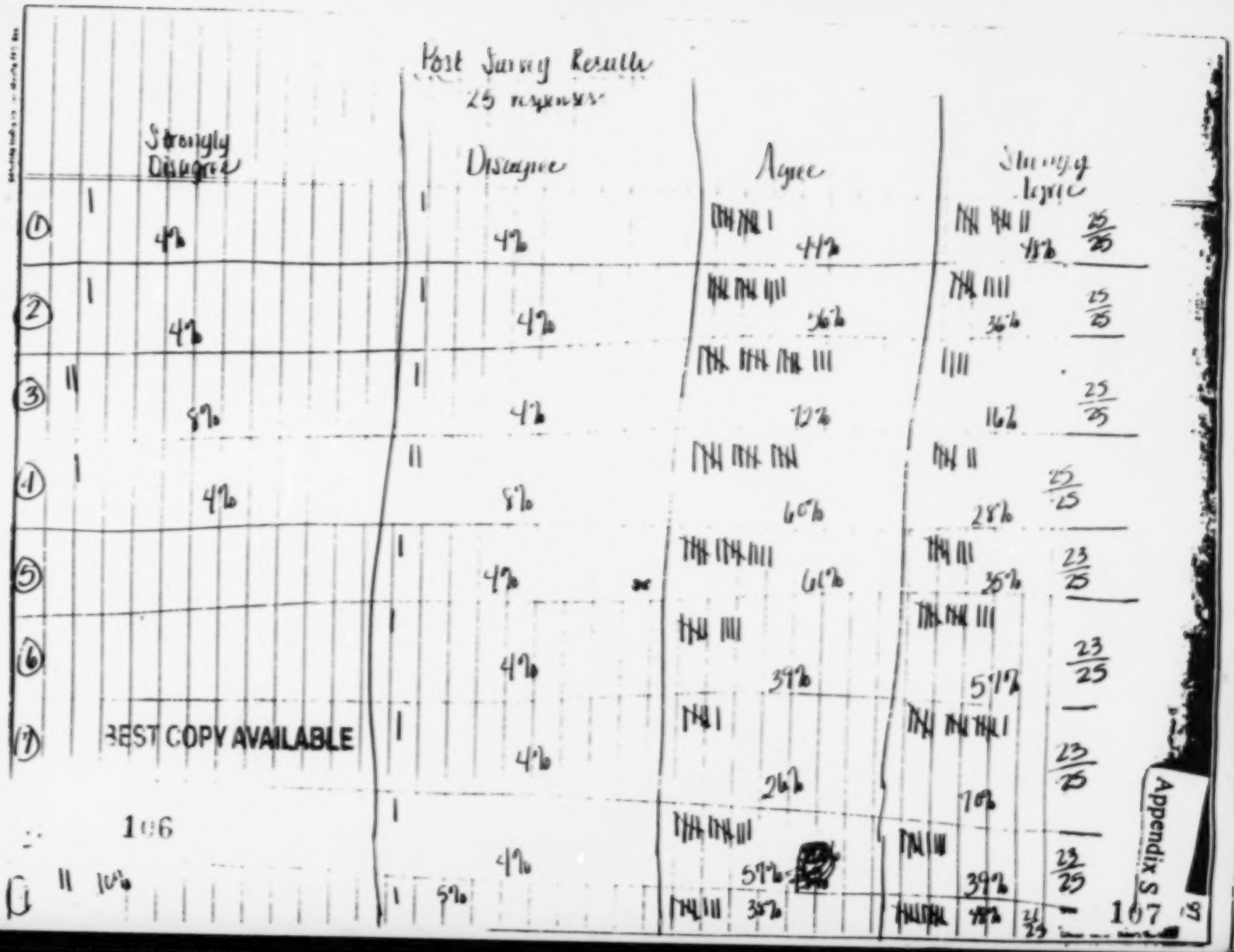
Please add any additional comments below:

_____

_____

_____

_____


Post Survey Results
25 responses
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Agree
Strongly Agree
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
4%
8%
12%
16%
28%
36%
52%
60%
24%
8%
4%
25/25
23/25
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106
107
Appendix S

Appendix T

Dear Parents,

I am currently in the process of "wrapping up" my research for my master's thesis regarding our portfolios. While we will continue to use our portfolios on a regular basis and bring them home for conferences, I would appreciate you filling out this survey to help in the last stage of gathering data. Thank you so much for all you have done to make this a wonderful opportunity for your child!

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Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. *My child's portfolio provides me with a clearer understanding of his/her academic performance in school.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. *My child's portfolio has aided me in understanding his/her report card.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. *My child's portfolio provides me with a clearer understanding of his/her academic strengths and weaknesses.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

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5. *In using the portfolio, my child is able to self-evaluate and judge their own work.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. *My child is enthusiastic about sharing their portfolio during their conference time with me.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. *My child displays pride in the work that is included in the portfolio.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. *Having portfolio conferences at home with my child has been beneficial thus far.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. *I enjoyed having my child participate in the fall Parent/Teacher conferences.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. *I would like to see my child continue to use a portfolio in the next school year.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please add any additional comments below:

- time just too much time in addition to reg

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